

# Consumer Alert

Federal Trade Commission ■ Bureau of Consumer Protection ■ Office of Consumer and Business Education

## How To BE PENNY WISE, NOT PUMP FUELISH

**T**he high price of gasoline doesn't have to bust your budget. According to the Federal Trade Commission and the AAA, what you spend at the pump depends on how you drive and what you use to fill your tank.

Most automobiles produced in the 1990's operate efficiently on *low octane gasoline*. In addition, with proper care, newer model cars can be driven farther between standard maintenance and tune-ups, racking up additional savings. Here's how you can fuel better driving habits and make fewer trips to the pump:



**Choose the right octane gasoline for your car.** Octane ratings measure gasoline's ability to resist engine knock. Check your owner's manual to find out what octane your engine needs, then buy it. Resist the urge to buy higher octane gas for "premium" performance: Most cars don't need a high octane gas to perform properly and efficiently. The AAA's experts say that about **five percent** of the cars sold in the United States require premium gasoline, yet premium gas accounts for **18 percent** of all gasoline sold. Moreover, the organization says, premium gas sells for an average of **16 cents more per gallon** than regular gas.



**Keep your tires inflated to the proper levels.** Properly inflated tires provide less road-resistance and can improve fuel efficiency. Check your owner's manual for the guide to appropriate inflation levels. This information is usually available on the jamb of the driver's-side door.



**Keep your engine maintained.** Make sure that you change the spark plugs and filters according to the manufacturer's recommendations.



**Drive smart: Stay within posted speed limits.** Driving at high speeds, especially on long driving trips, uses more gasoline. For example, driving at **65 miles per hour** (mph), rather than 55 mph, increases fuel consumption by **20 percent**. Further, driving at **75 mph**, rather than 65 mph, increases fuel consumption by another **25 percent**. "Jack-rabbit" starts and stops also are "fuelish."

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